

**Good Morning Everyone!**

**It's Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

**I hope you are keeping well and able to manage in the very difficult circumstances we now have.**

**Our living régime has become suddenly much tighter following the announcement on Friday last of the next stage in our national response to the Coronavirus Emergency.**

**Some people, if not all of us, will find these new restrictions very tough. Staying at home may be a nice idea when you have to be out and about; but when you have to actually stay at home, it's another matter.**

**Our daily routines have been utterly changed. We are in the midst of truly life-changing experiences. We wonder: How long will it last? And: What will the future be like? None of us knows the answers to those questions. For the moment, we have to live with the uncertainty and live through these difficult times.**

**Did anything like this ever happen before?**

**In the history that is reflected in the Bible there is much evidence that suggests that the answer to that question is Yes. The Bible is a document of Faith. During unsettling and unpredictable times down through the course of what's called Salvation History, i.e., the events that led over centuries to the Birth of Jesus where the hand of God was discerned to be at work, Faith became an anchor. An important dimension of our Catholic Faith today is that it offers us the comfort and assurance of the Heavenly Father, the support and accompaniment of Jesus Son of God and Saviour who is with us for all time, and the protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit.**

**Could I suggest to anyone who can to begin reading the Psalms? The Psalms are prayers that were sung by the ancient ancestors of Jesus. They reflect every mood and emotion: praise and thanksgiving, anger and fear, trust, hope and love. These are the prayers Jesus prayed and sang. He learnt them first from his parents at home. Lines from the Psalms were on Jesus' lips as he hung upon the cross; for instance:**

***My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? (Ps 22:2).***

**All religious pray the Psalms every day in the form of Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer and Evening Prayer from the Divine Office. These prayers are offered for the sanctification of the world. We can be sure that the Psalms are being prayed right now somewhere in the world for our intentions and welfare and protection.**

**I'm going to recite one of the Psalms now, Psalm 91 which is a prayer for protection:**

***Whoever goes to the Lord for safety  
Whoever remains under the protection  
Of the Almighty, can say to him,  
"You are my defender and protector.  
You are my God; in You I Trust".***

***He will keep you safe from all hidden  
dangers and from all deadly diseases.  
He will cover you with his wings;  
You will be safe in his care;  
His faithfulness will protect and defend you.***

***You need not fear any dangers at night  
or sudden attacks during the day or  
the plagues that strike in the dark or  
the evils that kill in daylight.***

***A thousand may fall dead beside you,  
ten thousand all round you, but you will not be harmed.***

***You have made the Lord your defender,  
the most high your protector,  
and so no disaster will strike you,  
no violence will come near your home.***

***God will put his angels in charge of***

*you to protect you wherever you go.  
They will hold you up with their hands  
to keep you from hurting your feet on the stones.*

**In the Eastern Church they have the tradition of what's called the Jesus Prayer. People literally say this short prayer hundreds and maybe thousands of times each day, and it brings great comfort. Here is the Jesus Prayer:**

***Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner!***

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**Say it over and over.**

**It is a prayer addressed to Jesus in the Gospels by people in great need.**

**Thanks to Natalie, our Parish Catechist, our Parish Website is up to scratch and up to date. She is working from home and preparing materials to help both parents and children through this trying time. She has already posted some of that material and will continue to do so.**

**She is presently working on a very nice idea: a virtual visit to our 2 churches. The hope is that a photo of each church will be posted on the Parish Website and you will be able to manipulate the photo in such a way as to focus on different things in the church that you know and love; so you might like to focus on the altar or tabernacle or a statue and make it into a moment of prayer.**

**It's a very strange experience saying Mass on my own. But it looks like I'll have to get used to it.**

**Until next time, keep yourself safe and well.**

**Look out for one another.**

**Follow the advice of the HSE.**

**Please join me for Mass from behind closed door tomorrow morning at 10 am.**

**God bless you all. Slán agus Beannacht.**